Tompkinsville United Methodist Church

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Jermyn, PA 18433
570-254-6050
Pastor: Beth Taylor
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tompkinsvilleumc.org

6 October 2020

Dear TUMC Member,

By now many of you should have received a text message from Pastor Beth that there will be no in-person worship this Sunday, 11 October. The reason is the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the county.

One of the guidelines that had to be met for reopening the church was the CDC benchmark of "…(less than) 50 new cases per 100,000 residents during the previous 14 days…" as outlined in our 14 September 2020 letter to you. That letter also stated that "…if there is a surge above the CDC benchmark, the church will reluctantly be shut down in accordance with our approved TUMC Procedures for Reopening to ensure we 'Do No Harm'." Unfortunately, Lackawanna County has experienced such a surge in the number of new cases and has now exceeded the CDC benchmark.

In fact, the number of new cases has exceeded the benchmark for several weeks, but the Council has only now made the decision to close the church again and stop in-person worship. To explain, the Council monitors the number of new COVID-19 cases on a daily and a weekly basis. Enclosure (1) is the Weekly Lackawanna County COVID-19 new case chart the Council uses to do that monitoring and which it used to make the decision to close again. As you can see from the chart, the number of new cases per 100,000 residents has exceeded the benchmark of 50 for several weeks; i.e, 107 from 29 August to 11 September, 96 from 12 to 25 September, and 98 for the seven day period from 26 September to 2 October. Based on articles in the Times-Tribune that a large number of the new cases involved students from the University of Scranton, the Council decided to remain open during this period, but when the number started rising very sharply last week, the Council said if it continued, the decision would have to be made to again close the church and stop the in-person worship services.

The daily new case counts continued to climb last week. Even taking into account the 30 September article in the Times-Tribune that "U of S students (were) behind (the) virus spike" and "Nearly 58% of new cases in (the) county in (the) last 6 weeks originated at (the) school" the number of new cases not attributable to the school was 41 for just the first seven days of this fourteen day period. Only nine more cases this week would put us over the CDC benchmark. This caused the Council to make the difficult decision to close the church and cease in-person worship services.

The latest data supports that decision. Enclosure (2) is the Daily Lackawanna County COVID-19 new case chart that the Council uses to take a more fine-grained look at what is happening with the virus. As you can see, the number of new cases continues to rise; i.e., 37 and 57 on 3 and 4 October respectively. Even taking out the 58 percent of cases attributable to the University of Scranton, the numbers soared to 16 and 24 respectively, far exceeding the nine required to put us over the CDC benchmark.

Faced with the hard facts and in order to ensure the safety of the membership, the Council reluctantly made the hard decision to close the church and cease any further in-person worship services until further notice. Once the number of new cases drops below the CDC benchmark

again, the Council will take up the question of reopening the church and starting in-person worship services again.

In the meantime, Pastor Beth will continue her on-line daily devotions and Sunday messages and you can continue to send your gifts and offerings to the Treasurer, Trula Allen. As always, if you need Pastor Beth for anything you can reach her on her cellphone, 570-760-8234. If you would like more information on the decision to close the church again or any other matter, you can contact the Chairman, Ralph Allen, at 570-254-4416, or any other member of the Church Council.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth D. Taylor
Pastor, TUMC

Ralph T. Allen
Chairman, TUMC Church Council

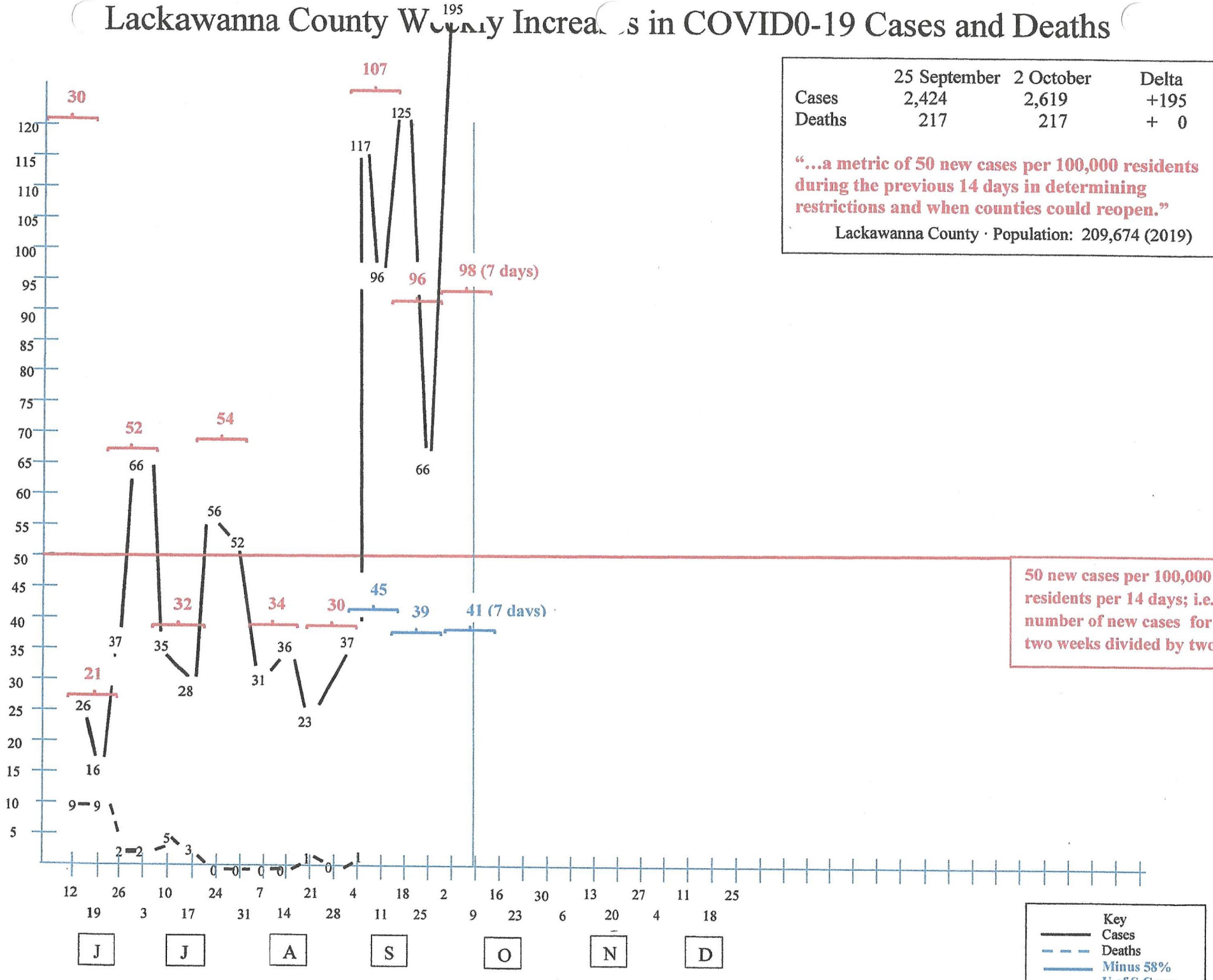
Encl: (1) Lackawanna County Weekly Increases in COVID-19 Cases and Deaths
(2) Lakawanna County Daily Increases in COVID-19 Cases and Deaths

Lackawanna County Weekly Increases in COVID0-19 Cases and Deaths

	25 September	2 October	Delta
Cases	2,424	2,619	+195
Deaths	217	217	+ 0

"...a metric of 50 new cases per 100,000 residents during the previous 14 days in determining restrictions and when counties could reopen."

Lackawanna County · Population: 209,674 (2019)



50 new cases per 100,000 residents per 14 days; i.e. number of new cases for two weeks divided by two

Key
- Cases
- Deaths
- Minus 58% U of S Cases

Lackawanna County Daily Increas , in COVID0-19 Cases and Deaths

